

# Missouri Task Force on Children's Justice

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## TASK FORCE ON CHILDREN'S JUSTICE PRESS RELEASE

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

The Missouri Task Force on Children's Justice submitted its Report to the Governor on its Assessment of the Dominic James Memorial Foster Care Reform Act of 2004 on November 30, 2007. At the request of the Governor, the Task Force has spent several months reviewing Missouri's progress on the implementation of foster care reform of both the Children's Division and the courts. The Task Force held focus groups, conducted interviews and received public comments from Children's Division personnel, case managers, court personnel, the judiciary, youth, parents and other stakeholders to view this progress. Overall, the Task Force concluded that Children's Division and the court system are to be commended for substantial and ongoing efforts to implement HB 1453, together with the other initiatives and projects designed to ultimately benefit children and families in Missouri.

Among the recommendations of the Task Force were the following:

1. The legislature commit to maintaining adequate funding of the Office of Child Advocate, which has shown a decrease in funding since its inception.
2. The Department of Education, Children's Division, and the courts establish a commission or working group to investigate protocols and policies, and if necessary, legislation, to ensure continuity of education for children in care of the State.
3. That a longitudinal study be conducted to track the outcomes of hotline calls and other quantitative data to assess whether this heightened standard is placing children at risk and is contrary to the best interests of the child.
4. Children's Division should review, update, and ensure implementation of the policy related to notifying self-identified reporters of the disposition of a case, as well as referring the matter to the Office of Child Advocate.
5. Children's Division review hotline protocols particularly when there are allegations of sexual abuse to ensure that these calls are prioritized regardless of whether or not the call originates from an anonymous or mandated reporter.
6. That Children's Division collect data on the monetary costs of offering services through private service providers compared to services under the existing system. Further, that Children's Division implement a

research program to collect data related to the effects of identified outcomes on children to ascertain whether privatization is in the best interests of the children of Missouri.

7. The Governor and the legislature continue to provide funding to support accreditation and other components of the child welfare system.

The CJA Task Force is comprised of representatives across the state from the areas of law enforcement, health, mental health, judiciary, education, community services, child advocacy, child welfare, residential services, and the state legislature. The Missouri Task Force on Children's Justice was established by the Children's Division with a Mission to benefit and enhance children's lives by recommending improvement of child abuse and neglect laws, policies, programs, professional education and public awareness, and to provide funding to support these recommendations.

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***Our Mission***

*To advocate for improvements in the Child Welfare System in Missouri*  
*[www.dss.mo.gov/cd/cjtf](http://www.dss.mo.gov/cd/cjtf)*